

**Dr. G.P. “Bud” Peterson**

**President, Georgia Institute of Technology**

**Presidents’ Dinner Remarks**

**Saturday, May 22, 2010**

*(As written; not necessarily as delivered)*

Good evening. It is my pleasure to join Joe Evans and Mac Nease in welcoming you to this Presidents’ Dinner. This is a celebration of you, your generous philanthropy and your partnership in making Georgia Tech what it is today—what I have come to believe after a year of unbiased personal research - the best public university in the country.

There are a number of special friends who weren’t able to join us tonight because they’re supporting Basketball Coach Paul Hewitt and his wife Dawnette at “the BasketBALL”- a gala to benefit the American Society. Paul and Dawnette are co-chairing this very worthy American Cancer Society Coaches vs. Cancer event to benefit the society’s Winn-Dixie Hope Lodge in Atlanta where cancer patients stay free of charge while undergoing treatment at area medical facilities. Coach Hewitt has taken a leadership role in the National Association of Basketball Coaches efforts to fight cancer, and our basketball team members have gotten involved as well. That’s one of many ways the people of Georgia Tech are joining together to fight this disease. We have a number of faculty who are leading breakthrough research in the war against cancer

It’s hard to believe Val and I have been part of the Georgia Tech family for almost 14 months. And I want to take a moment to thank you for your warm welcome. We’ve enjoyed getting to know many of you, and look forward to meeting even more of you later tonight and in the coming months on campus. Since passing the one-year mark, I have enjoyed getting to participate in traditions the second time around. When I spoke to you last May, I was on a turbo-speed learning curve to get to know the people, programs and platforms of Georgia Tech, while at the same time serving as an ambassador of our Institute. Over the past year, Val and I have met with thousands of Georgia Tech people, as well as with leaders throughout the state, and the nation, sharing the Georgia Tech story.

In the past month I’ve talked about Georgia Tech everywhere from Peking University in Beijing, China to the Rotary Club in Dublin, Georgia. While there are cultural differences—they’re more interested in our football program in Dublin-- the more people know about Georgia Tech, the more impressed they are.

You have contributed to our reputation of excellence, by what you do in your jobs and communities, and the way you give back to Georgia Tech. I echo Joe’s thanks for your generosity through Roll Call. Your support is vital, especially in this challenging economic environment that has resulted in reduced state funding. Your gifts are providing us with the resources and flexibility we need to sustain an environment of excellence. Georgia Tech alumni and friends are very loyal—in fact we still have the highest percentage of alumni givers of any university in America, and you are the leaders of that.

For my last couple of talks with civic and community groups, I’ve had as a theme “Investing in Futures.” Higher education is just about the best investment you can make, as an individual, for our state, and for our future. You’re investing in futures, and you’re making a difference. Let me tell give you a brief investment report:

Georgia Tech is ranked seventh among all public universities in the U.S.

Last fall we welcomed the largest, most diverse and best qualified freshman class in Tech's history, and it is trending that way for this fall. These young people are a tribute to the reputation that Tech enjoys nationally today. This year our total enrollment surpassed 20,000 for the first time in Tech history.

We are a national leader in graduating engineers of course and we rank #1 in the number of women and African American engineers, and #2 in the number of Hispanic engineers graduated. We're very proud of that. We also have outstanding programs in architecture, computing, management, the sciences, and liberal arts.

We are in the business of preparing leaders for this fast changing world. Two weeks ago we had our spring graduation ceremonies for our 2,800 bachelor's, master's and PhD graduates, and I think I shook hands with every one of them. Instead of tennis elbow, I'm now the proud owner of "graduation elbow." One of the favorite parts of my job is seeing graduates with their family and friends, along with many of the professors who challenged them, share the jubilation we all feel when a job is well done. I have no doubt that I was shaking hands with future CEOs, inventors, and government and community leaders.

We have a half-billion dollar enterprise in research. Through breakthroughs and new discoveries we're able to help business and industry, and help society solve some of its most pressing problems. Through our research and partnership with business and industry, we're an economic engine for Georgia and the Southeast, with an annual impact of more than \$2 billion, conservatively. In 2008 alone, Georgia Tech programs helped Georgia companies save or create 20,000 jobs.

Georgia Tech is attracting industries, helping to create new businesses, and preparing students to be entrepreneurs and leaders. We encourage innovation and emphasize leadership.

All universities educate students, and many pursue research. Great universities also lead in education by changing what and how we teach, and by how our students learn. They lead in research by creating new knowledge and by identifying new solutions. Great universities define and direct the way our world changes rather than just waiting for it to happen.

For the past nine months, the entire Georgia Tech community has been involved in a comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process to develop a plan to take the Institute to its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary 25 years from now. The results will chart a new course for Georgia Tech providing greater agility in a rapidly changing environment, helping us to better serve the state, nation, and world through our education, research, innovation and service.

Georgia Tech will define the technological research university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That's our aspiration and it will lead us to influencing major technological, social, and policy decisions that address critical global challenges. 'What does Georgia Tech think?' will be a common question in research, business, the media and government.

This is an exciting time for to be a part of Georgia Tech. We're building on our legendary heritage to design the future. I'm so glad you've chosen to partner with us. Thank you.